

Sūrah Su‘ād

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous Sūrah

Like the previous *sūrahs* of this group, this *sūrah* is also based on *tawhīd*. It is explained in it that the Qur’ān is a great reminder for the Quraysh; however, merely because of their arrogance and haughtiness and because of their fervour and lunacy for polytheism are opposing them and are totally indifferent to the fate from which the Qur’ān is warning them of. They will profess faith after seeing their fate at a time when professing faith will be of no use to them.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-11): This Qur’ān is a reminder for people; however, because of arrogance and haughtiness they are opposing it. Many nations before them had adopted a similar attitude regarding the reminder of God and were destroyed. These people, like those before them, will also profess faith at a time when it will be of no avail. They are not able to digest the fact that a person from among them, as God’s messenger, should warn them of the fate of polytheism. Hence, with full force and enthusiasm they have undertaken to support their idols and ancestral religion and regard the messenger as a sorcerer and a liar. They consider themselves to be the sole recipients of all the favours of God. For this reason, they are infatuated with the notion that had God intended to reveal a Book it would have been to some rich person among them and not, God forbid, to a poverty-stricken person as Muḥammad (sws). In other words, they think that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is in their hands; they fail to realize that when they will be seized by God, they will be totally helpless.

Verses (12-16): Some previous nations are mentioned who had similarly adopted an arrogant attitude with regard to the messengers of God and ultimately met a horrible fate. In this background, the Quraysh are warned not to invite the wrath of God; they will not be able to bear even one of His reprimands.

Verses (17-26): The Prophet (sws) is urged to be patient and steadfast. Some incidents from the life of David (sws) are referred to; he was blessed with great power and majesty; however, this did not make him

proud and arrogant; on the contrary, the more wealth and grandeur he was given, the more grateful and penitent he became. He would be chastened from the incidents that took place in the life of others and would seek from these incidents lessons of reforming himself. His was a just government and he meted out justice and fairness in the land. He never created disorder by being inflicted with arrogance.

Verses (17-29): This is a warning sounded at its opportune time: this world is not a place of amusement. Those who regard this to be so disbelieve in the Hereafter. If there is no Hereafter, then this would mean that the reformers and anarchists, the pious and the wicked have the same status in the eyes of the creator of this world. Such a thing cannot even be imagined about a wise creator. The Almighty has revealed this Book so that people reflect on its verses, be reminded by its arguments and come out from such dire misconceptions.

Verses (30-40): The wealth and majesty of Solomon (sws) are mentioned and certain incidents relating to his grateful and penitent attitude are referred to. The purpose is exactly the same as the one for which certain incidents relating to David (sws) were mentioned earlier.

Verses (41-49): In order to assure the Prophet (sws) some other prophets of God are briefly alluded to. These prophets faced hardships for the cause of God with fortitude and steadfastness. As a result, the Almighty granted them success both in this world and in that to come.

Verses (50-64): It is stated that this world is not a place in which people will be left unaccountable for their deeds. Hence, a day of judgement shall necessarily come in which the pious and the wrongdoers will be rewarded and punished for their deeds respectively. Next, this reward and punishment is explained.

Verses (65-88): In this closing section of the *sūrah*, a declaration is made by the Prophet (sws) that he is a warner and that there is no god except the one and dominant God; what he is informing people of is certain to come; those who are denying it because of arrogance are only following Satan and will meet the same fate destined for Satan and his accomplices.

Text and Translation

Section 1: Verses (1-16)

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ (١) بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ (٢) كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّن قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوا وَلَوْلَا تَحِيُّنُ الْمَوْتِ لَوَقَفُوا فِي أَفْقَادِ (٣) وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنْذِرٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَقَالَ

الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (٤) أَجْعَلِ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ (٥)
 وَانْطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنِ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ (٦) مَا سَمِعْنَا
 بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَافٌ (٧) أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ
 مِّنْ ذِكْرِي بَلْ لَمَّا يَدُوفُوا عَذَابٍ (٨) أَمْ عَنْدهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ (٩)
 أَمْ لَهُمْ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ (١٠) جُنْدٌ مَا هُنَالِكَ
 مَهْزُومٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْزَابِ (١١) كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ (١٢) وَثَمُودُ
 وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ أُولَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ (١٣) إِنْ كُلِّ إِلَّا كَذَبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ
 عِقَابِ (١٤) وَمَا يَنْظُرُ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صِحَّةً وَاحِدَةً مَا لَهَا مِنْ فَوَاقٍ (١٥) وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ
 لَنَا قِطْعَنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (١٦)

This is Sūrah Ṣu‘ād. By the profusely reminding Qur’an [that everything it says is the truth]. In fact, those who have rejected it are the ones inflicted with arrogance and enmity. How many nations have We destroyed before them! So they created an uproar when it was too late to escape. (1-3)

These people expressed wonder that an informer from among themselves has come to them. And the disbelievers said: “He is a sorcerer and liar. Has he made all the gods as one? This is indeed a very strange thing.” Their leaders got up saying: “Set out and stand firm in the worship of your gods; indeed, this is what needs to be done. We have not heard of this in this later period; it is nothing but a fabrication. Has this reminder been revealed to him alone among us?” In fact, they are in doubt about My reminder; in fact, they have not yet tasted My scourge. (4-8)

Are the treasures of your powerful and munificent Lord in their possession? Do they have sole control of whatever is in the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them? If this is so, then let them climb up to the sky. [When My scourge comes] then at that time the greatest of armies from the factions will certainly be defeated. (9-11)

Before them, the people of Noah, ‘Ād, and the Pharaoh who had large armies denied; and also the Thamūd, the compatriots of Lot, and the dwellers of the Forest too. These are the factions. All of them denied the messengers; so My scourge did visit them. And these people also are waiting but for a single blast after which there is no respite. And they said: “Lord! Call us to account before the Day of Accountability comes!” (13-16)

Explanation

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ⁽¹⁾

The word ص is from among the abbreviated letters (*hurūf muqatta‘āt*). It is also the Qur’ānic name of this *sūrah*. I have already dealt in detail with these letters at the beginning of Sūrah Baqarah’s *tafsīr*. Some people have tried to determine its meaning but in my opinion this is a needless effort.

Just as in Sūrah Yāsīn, the oath sworn by the Qur’ān is qualified by the attribute حَكِيم, here this oath is qualified by the attribute: ذِي الذِّكْرِ. The actual meaning of ذِكْر is to remind. The Qur’ān is an embodiment of reminding. That is why it is called ذِكْر at various places. Verse 8 ahead is an example. There are many aspects because of which it is called by this name and attribute:

- It reminds man of all the truths innately found in human nature; however, he has forgotten them.
- It reminds man of the guidance which the Almighty revealed through his messengers for all His creatures and which people had forgotten.
- It reminds man of the important incidents that took place in this world in which God’s mercy and torment manifested themselves.
- It informs man of the fate met by those who denied their respective messengers.
- It reminds man of the accountability and reward and punishment with which he will be faced once this world ends.

All these aspects are found in the attribute ذِي الذِّكْرِ. They will be further explained under verses 8-17, 46-49 and 86 of this *sūrah*.

The complement (*muqṣam ‘alayh*) of this oath is not mentioned in words. It is found in the oath itself. This style is adopted in places where such is the nature of the oath that its complement is evident from the oath itself. Similar is the case here. The purpose is that the reminders with which the Qur’ān is replete bear witness that what the Quraysh are being reminded of today is undeniable. If they are not believing in them, then this is not because there is any doubt in the Qur’ān; the mere reason for this denial is their egotism and enmity.

1. This is Sūrah Ṣu‘ād. By the profusely reminding Qur’an [that everything it says is the truth].

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ²

The words الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا specially refer to the Quraysh. The verse states that the reason for their denial is not that there is any shortcoming in the reminders of the Qur'ān; the reason is their arrogance and enmity. Details of this arrogance and obduracy follow in the succeeding verses. The implication is that the problem lies not in the Qur'ān but in them. The Qur'ān is reminding them in a very effective and absorbing manner; its reminders are also based on sound arguments. However, how can these reminders influence those who have taken to egotism and enmity.

كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوا وَلَا تَحِثِّمَنَّا³

The implication of the verse is that it is really weighing down heavily on their egotism that they are being warned that if they adhere to denying the Qur'ān they will be seized by God's punishment. Many examples have already been narrated to them that nations who persisted in this obduracy were destroyed. When they were seized by God, they raised a lot of hue and cry and repented and declared faith; however, at that time, the possibility for them remained to evade this divine punishment. This is because after the manifestation of divine punishment the time for repentance and professing faith expires.

The word لَا تَحِثِّمَنَّا is actually لَا. The letter ت is added to it. Such an addition also takes place with تُمْ and رَبِّ. However, with this addition of ت the word لَا تَحِثِّمَنَّا specifically refers to negation of time.

وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنْذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ⁴

The implication of this verse is that these people were wonder-struck on seeing someone from among them has come to them as a warner from God; why was someone from among them given this status? And if at all this was to be done, why did God select a poor person for this? Why did He not select someone from the chiefs of Makkah and Tā'if? In other words, the reasons for their denial were that a human being was given

2. In fact, those who have rejected it are the ones inflicted with arrogance and enmity.

3. How many nations have We destroyed before them! So they created an uproar when it was too late to escape.

4. These people expressed wonder that an informer from among themselves has come to them. And the disbelievers said: "He is a sorcerer and liar."

the status of God's messenger and that the human being selected was a pauper. This verse refers to the first of these reasons. In verse eight ahead, the second of these reasons is mentioned. Both these reasons signify conceit and arrogance earlier referred to by the word عِزَّة.

The words وَقَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ refer to the fact that it is because of their arrogance and haughtiness that these disbelievers regard God's messenger to be a sorcerer and a liar. At its appropriate place, I have already explained the reason why these disbelievers would regard the Prophet (sws) to be a sorcerer and the Qur'ān to be sorcery. The Quraysh could not refute the miraculous eloquence of the Qur'ān; however, they did not want it to influence their masses lest being mesmerized by the this eloquence they accept it as the word of God. In order to prevent this from happening, they would regard the Qur'ān as sorcery and the Prophet (sws) as a sorcerer. In this way, they would try to convince their followers that the impact and sway held by this discourse of this person is not because he received divine revelations but because he is a sorcerer and magician of words; for this reason, what he says effects the hearts. It is for this very reason that these people would also call the Qur'ān as poetry and the Prophet (sws) a poet.

The word كَذَّابٌ means a person whose is a liar and a bragger. They would call the Prophet (sws) by this name in their frenzied negation of his claim to prophethood. In other words, by using this word it would mean that though this person is a magician of words but to bluff the masses he claims that whatever he says is revealed to him from God and that he has been sent to them as a warner by Him. Since their real aversion was to the claim of Muḥammad (sws) to prophethood they would vehemently negate it, as is evident from this word.

The style of this verse bears witness that it expresses sorrow at these unfortunate people. In other words, the Almighty had sent a warner from among themselves to remind and warn them and also revealed a book replete with reminders yet because of arrogance and conceit they express wonder that a human being from among themselves has been sent to warn them. This haughtiness led these disbelievers to call a prophet of God as a sorcerer and a liar.

أَجْعَلِ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ (٥)

Besides Muḥammad's (sws) claim to prophethood, the second thing

5. Has he made all the gods as one? This is indeed a very strange thing."

which the leaders of the Quryash had great aversion to was the message of *tawhīd* preached by him. They would incite their masses by using this belief to their advantage. It is known that each tribe of Arabia had its own god and every tribe blindly believed in it. So these leaders would incite them with this vicious propaganda that this person has abolished all these gods and claims that there is only one God; what can be more eerie than this! A little deliberation shows that there are two poisonous slants hidden in this sentence: firstly, this person has done away with the all the gods except the God he believes in; secondly, he has done something so unique that its parallel cannot be found in their history of their forefathers. The word عَجَابٌ has more exaggeration and emphasis in it than عَجِيبٌ. A little deliberation shows that this propaganda was enough to incite the whole Arabian nation against the Prophet (sws). However, the Almighty protected him against its evil.

وَانْطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنِ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ⁶

This is a portrayal of the attitude which the leaders of the Quraysh would adopt to drive away people from the message of *tawhīd* preached by the Prophet (sws): when at times they saw that people were being influenced by his message, they would walk away from that place and induce others as well to leave that place. They would advise them not to listen to what the Prophet (sws) has to say and to strongly adhere to the worship of their deities.

The words إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ mean that this is what needs to be done. The leaders of the Quraysh would tell the masses that the religion preached by this person is an attempt to make them renounce their ancestral religion; on the other hand, what needs to be done by each one of them is that in spite of his attempts they should strongly adhere to worshipping their deities till their last breath.

مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِن هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَافٌ⁷

This is a refutation by the Quraysh of the history which the Prophet (sws) would narrate of the Arab nation. He had explained by citing history that all prophets of God from Noah (sws) to Abraham (sws) preached the pure message of *tawhīd*. In particular, the teachings of

6. Their leaders got up saying: "Set out and stand firm in the worship of your gods; indeed, this is what needs to be done.

7. We have not heard of this in this later period; it is nothing but a fabrication.

Abraham (sws) and the history of Ishmael (sws) and the Baytullāh mentioned very clearly in the Qur'ān were meant to explain to the Arabs that the actual history of their nation begins with Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). These noble people had settled their progeny in Arabia to serve Islam and preach the pure message of *tawhīd*. The house of God – whose custodianship is currently in the hands of Quraysh – was also built for this purpose. They have placed idols in every nook and corner of this House. This history narrated by the Qur'ān was a heavy blow to the claims of the Quraysh. Such was its clarity and influence that they had nothing to say in response that could appeal to the hearts of people. However, because of their stubbornness and arrogance they were also not willing to accept it. For this reason, they would say that they have never heard the message of *tawhīd* in this later part of their history; hence what is being narrated to them of it is a total fabrication. What they meant was that had the history of the Arab nation been the one narrated by the Qur'ān and which Muḥammad (sws) is presenting in such a challenging manner, then at least some part of it should have been found in their later history; however, they have heard nothing of the like from their forefathers; it is the religion they are practicing which they received from them. They are following it and will keep following it.

Some people are of the opinion that *الْمِلَّةَ الْآخِرَةَ* refers to the Christian nation; however, no contextual indication for this exists. This reference would only have been worthwhile for them if the Quraysh and their masses believed in this or if the Prophet (sws) had invited them to the belief of *tawhīd* on the basis of the Christian nation.

أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْ ذِكْرِي بَلْ لَمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابٍ ^٨

The verse states that while being overcome with the conceit of their political leadership they would say that if God wanted to reveal a book to a human being, then was He able to find only this person (ie. Muḥammad (sws)) for the task? Had God wanted to depute someone on this task, He would have chosen someone from the nobles of Makkah and Ṭā'if and not someone as penniless as him. They would reckon that when the Almighty has chosen them for all the successes of this world, why would He choose this person for this task? The verse actually expresses their arrogance referred to in verse two by the words: *فِي عِزَّةٍ*. It is to strike at this arrogance of theirs that it is said: *بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْ ذِكْرِي*

8. Has this reminder been revealed to him alone among us?" In fact, they are in doubt about My reminder; in fact, they have not yet tasted My scourge.

بَلْ لَّمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابٍ ie., this haughty attitude of theirs is because they are still in doubt about the punishment which the Qur’ān is reminding them of; they think that this is a bluff. The reason for this is that they have not observed this punishment as yet; they are ones who do not get convinced from arguments and only believe in what they see. In other words, what is implied is that for now arguments are being used to convince them; however, if this does not work, then the lash of punishment shall strike them.

أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ (٩)⁹

This verse is a response to their arrogance referred to by the previous verse that except for themselves they do not think that there is any other person worthy of any of God’s favours; they think that God has handed over all the keys of all His treasures to them and given them the authority to distribute them to whomsoever they like and deprive whomsoever they desire. Thus they are not being able to understand why God should give prophethood and His Book to those who do not belong to their fraternity. They should realize that God is الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ which means that He is the sole owner of all His treasures and also their sole distributor. He gives to those of His people in abundance who may not have any status before the eyes of these arrogant yet have a high status in the eyes of God. Thus these arrogant people should realize that if they have been given some ordinary things of life by God on which they are showing conceit, He has given the dominion of prophethood and wisdom to whomsoever He wanted to. No greater a status can be imagined beyond this. In Sūrah Tūr, this topic is mentioned in the following words: (أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَبِّكَ أَمْ هُمْ الْمُضْطَرُونَ (٥٢: ٣٧) (Do they have the treasures of your Lord or are they in charge of them?) (52:37)

أَمْ لَهُمْ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي الْأَسْبَابِ (١٠)¹⁰

This verse explains what is said earlier: if they claim that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to them, they should climb the skies and try to impede the mercy which the Almighty is revealing to His people.

The word أَسْبَابِ connotes السَّمَاوَاتِ. This word is also used for

9. Are the treasures of your powerful and munificent Lord in their possession?

10. Do they have sole control of whatever is in the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them? If this is so, then let them climb up to the sky.

add-ons and borders of something. Research on the lexical aspects of this word has been presented earlier in this *tafsīr*.

جُنْدٌ مَّا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِّنَ الْأَحْزَابِ (١١)¹¹

The word هُنَالِكَ points to the locus of the punishment referred to in verse eight by the words: لَمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابٍ. What is meant is that if these people are waiting for the manifestation of God’s punishment, they should remember that when it comes then the greatest of armies belonging to any people will not be able to stand before it; it is destined to be doomed. The word جُنْدٌ is not defined to express its magnitude and extent. What is thus implied is that whatever be the army and whatever be its magnitude and strength it will be routed by the torment of God.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ (١٢) وَثَمُودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ وَأَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ أُولَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ (١٣) إِنَّ كُلَّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ (١٤)¹²

The expression ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ means “companion of the pegs”. In Arabic, pegs signify tents and from here this world is allegorically used for armies. This allegorical use of the word is similar to using the expression قُدُورَ رَأْسِيَّاتٍ to signify the generosity of a person. This expression is used in the Qur’an (34:13) to refer to the generosity of Solomon (sws). Here the expression ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ refers to the large number of the Pharaoh’s armies who lived in tents. At many places in the Qur’ān, their plentiful number is referred to and all these armies drowned with him when the divine scourge visited them.

The expression refers to the people of Madyan. The word أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ means “forest”. It seems that there was a forest near Madyan because of which its people were called thus. Research on it has already been presented earlier.

In verse eight, it was pointed out that when the divine torment arrives no group of faction however powerful it may be will be able to survive before it. The verses under discussion provide a historical proof of this.

11. [When My scourge comes,] then at that time the greatest of armies from the factions will certainly be defeated.

12. Before them, the people of Noah, ‘Ād, and the Pharaoh who had large armies denied; and also the Thamūd, the compatriots of Lot, and the dwellers of the Forest too. These are the factions. All of them denied the messengers; so My scourge did visit them.

All these nations rejected their respective messengers and when as a consequence they were visited by divine punishment none could defend itself.

The enunciative (*khavar*) of **أُولَئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ** is suppressed. This is because it is self-evident from the occasion and context and the next part of the verse is pointing to it. What is implied is: look at the fate these prominent nations; when the punishment of God arrived they were totally routed. In other words, the Quraysh too will meet the same fate if they follow their ways.

The verse **إِنْ كُلُّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ** alludes to the fact that the crime of each of these nations was that they rejected their respective messenger and the Quraysh too are now guilty of this crime. The expression **فَحَقَّ** is actually **عِقَابِي**. In deference to the rhyme of the passage, the **ي** has been dispensed with the way it has been in: (٨ : ٣٨) **لَمَّا يَذُوقُوا عَذَابِ**

وَمَا يَنْظُرُ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مَّا لَهَا مِنْ فَوَاقٍ (١٥) وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجَلْ لَنَا قِطْنَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (١٦)¹³

The word **فَوَاقٍ** means “respite”.

The word **قِطَّ** means “share”.

The verse refers to the Quraysh: today they are arrogantly demanding the promised punishment as if they have impregnable defence against it; the fact of the matter is that only one shout of God will be needed to rout them; a second one would not even be required. Such will be its grasp that they will not be able to escape it even for a moment.

The verse points to the arrogance of the Quraysh in demanding the punishment. In their frenzy of rejecting Muḥammad (sws), they went as far as to say that if he is right in his claim that if they reject him a punishment will visit them, then let this punishment come before the Day of Judgement; in this manner, the truth of his claim will be known if he is really truthful and the falsity of his claim will also known if (God forbid) he is lying— which in their opinion he is. This demand of the Quraysh is also mentioned in Sūrah Anfāl in the following words:

وَإِذْ قَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كَانَ هَذَا هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَأَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَابَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ

13. And these people also are waiting but for a single blast after which there is no respite. And they said: “Lord! Call us to account before the Day of Accountability comes!”

أَوِاثِنَا بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٨: ٣٢)

And when they said: "Lord! If this is the truth from you, then rain down stones on us from the sky or send us a woeful torment. (8:32)

It is mentioned in certain narratives that at the time of the battle of Badr, Abū Jahal had prayed to God to crush the person who is guilty of severing blood ties to the extent that the swords of people within the Quraysh tribe are being unleashed against one another.

Section II: Verses (17-29)

In the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is directed to remain strong and steadfast on his stance in spite of the opposition of his enemies. He is also urged to seek guidance from the account of David (sws) and to also relate this account before the Quraysh: there is no comparison with the extent of wealth and riches the Almighty gave him in relation to the Quraysh. However, in spite of being blessed with so much He did not become arrogant and proud; on the contrary, the more he was given, the more thankful and inclined to God he became. He would listen to the disputes of people with great patience and forbearance and justly settle them. If during these hearings anything that was a means to seek a lesson came before him, he would bow down in repentance before God. He administered the great empire God gave him in accordance with the directives of God and was never led away by his desires while being overcome with arrogance. He was aware of the fact that after being blessed with authority in this world those who forget the authority of God and the accountability of the Hereafter will not be able to escape from His grasp. The reason is that God has not created this world as a place of amusement; it is essential that a day come in which He reward people who fulfilled their obligation to the *khilāfah* they were bestowed with on this earth and punish those who created disorder in the land because of their arrogance.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

اصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٧) إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعِشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (١٨) وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٩) وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَآتَيْنَاهُ

الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصَّلَ الْخِطَابِ (٢٠) وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخُسْفِ إِذْ تُسَوِّرُوا الْعُرَابَ (٢١) إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصِمَانِ بَعِيَ بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ (٢٢) إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعَجَةً وَلِي نَعَجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (٢٣) قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعَجَتِكَ إِلَى نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ وَظَنَّ دَاوُدُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (٢٤) فَعَزَّمْنَا لَهُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَى وَحُسْنَ مَّآبٍ (٢٥) يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ (٢٦) وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ (٢٧) أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ (٢٨) كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٩)

Bear with what they say, and recount the tale of Our mighty servant David. Indeed, he was very penitent to God. We joined with him the mountains which would glorify God with him evening and morning, and the birds too, in all their flocks – all were penitent to God. We had made his kingdom strong, and gave him wisdom and the ability to judge affairs. (17-20)

Has the news of the rivals reached you who entered his chamber by climbing over the wall? When they reached David, he got alarmed. He said: “Do not be alarmed; we are two rivals in a case; one has committed excess against the other; so fairly judge between us and do not be unjust; and guide us to the right path.” (21-22)

This is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewes, and I have only one ewe. Thus he demanded that I should consign this to him as well, and he got the better of me in the argument. David replied: “He has certainly been unjust to you by demanding your ewe for adding it to his flock. And many partners in this manner are unjust to one another; only those are an exception to it who have faith and do good deeds and such people are very few indeed.” And David realized that We have tested him; so He sought forgiveness of his Lord and turned to him in penitence fell down on his knees and repented. So We forgave him, and indeed with Us is a

favoured place for him and a good fate. (23-25)

“O David! We have made you a caliph in the land; so deal with justice among men and you must not yield to your desire, lest it turn you away from God’s path. Those who stray from the path of God shall be sternly punished because they became unmindful of the Day of Reckoning. (26)

And it was not in vain that We created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. This is the estimation of those who professed disbelief; so for those who have disbelieved is the devastation of Hell. Are We to equate those that have professed faith and did righteous deeds with those who spread anarchy in the land? Or are We to equate the pious with the defiant? This is an extremely blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that people may ponder on its verses and the wise are reminded by it. (27-29)

Explanation

اصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٧)¹⁴

Some very potent incidents from the lives of the prophets David (sws) and Solomon (sws) have also been mentioned in Sūrahs Anbiyā’, Naml and Sabā’. Here some new incidents of their lives are recounted. These incidents are a means of assurance not only for the Prophet (sws) but are also a means of great guidance for the leaders of the Quraysh if they care to benefit from them. The word اذْكُرْ has two aspects in it. One of them relates to the Prophet (sws): when he hears an upsetting statement from his opponents, he should receive assurance from the life of God’s servant David (sws). In spite of being powerful, he would bear with patience and fortitude the despicable behaviour of his opponents, decide matters with great justice and clemency and seek a lesson from the incidents of others.

The second aspect relates to the arrogant among the Quraysh which are under discussion. The Prophet (sws) should relate to them the incidents that took place in the life of God’s servant David (sws): in spite of being much more rich and affluent than the Quraysh, this did not make him arrogant and conceited like them; he was a person who would always turn to God. It is evident from his life that he would realize his own mistakes from incidents that occurred in the lives of others and would fall down before his Lord in penitence.

The expression إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ means that he was a person who would turn to God. Incidents which are narrated here highlight this very trait of David

14. Bear with what they say, and recount the tale of Our mighty servant David. Indeed, he was very penitent to God.

(sws). In some of the other *sūrahs*, the trait of being grateful to God found in him and in his father is highlighted. In this *sūrah*, his humility and penitence are drawn attention to in order to strike at the arrogance of the Quraysh which is mentioned in the very first verse by the words: عِزَّةٌ and شِقَاقٍ.

It needs to be kept in mind that man is not an angel so that he cannot err. When man has been blessed with the favour of authority, and he is being tested with regard to this favour as well, there is a chance that he may err at every step. However, this possibility of erring on his part is not meant to ruin and rout him; through it, he can achieve great success for himself if he learns to turn to God and repent whenever he errs. A person falls in an abyss in this regard only when he keeps on erring until a stage is reached that he is so engulfed by sins from all sides that not only does he not realize himself what he doing, he, out of arrogance, embarks on inflicting harm on people who try to make him realize his follies. The Qur’ān here by simultaneously mentioning both attributes of ذَا الْأَيْدِ and أَوَّابٌ has shown that a person who has power and political authority will only be liked by the Almighty when besides being powerful he is also penitent. If power makes a person haughty and arrogant, then this turns him into a Nimrod and a Pharaoh who are cursed and have incurred the wrath of the Almighty.

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعُشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (١٨) وَالطَّيْرَ مُحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ (١٩)¹⁵

These verses explain the penitent nature of David (sws): he would glorify the Almighty morning and evening while sitting beside a mountain and when he would chant hymns of the Almighty from his Psalms in his melodious voice, the mountains too would join this chanting with him and birds too would flock together and unite with them in this singing. The Almighty had made his melodious voice and compassionate heart so moving and effective that the atmosphere around him would resound with his voice, and every nook and corner and every creature of God would join him in invoking and beseeching God and in turning to Him in penitence. I have already explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr* that every object of this universe glorifies the Almighty yet we may not understand it; if we do not understand this, it does not necessarily mean that no one can understand it. Just as the

15. We joined with him the mountains which would glorify God with him evening and morning, and the birds too, in all their flocks – all were penitent to God.

Almighty had blessed David (sws) with the mellow voice to melt mountains and attract birds, He had also blessed him with the earnest ears to understand their glorification of the Almighty. I have explained this in the earlier *sūrahs*. For this reason, I have only briefly alluded to it here.

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَضَّلَ الْخِطَابَ (٢٠)¹⁶

This is a mention of the power and might of David (sws) referred to earlier by the word: ذَا الْأَيْدِ. The expression شَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ means “We fully strengthened his rule.” This was done by blessing him with الْحِكْمَةَ and فَضَّلَ الْخِطَابَ. I have already explained the first of these at its appropriate place. The second of these means the ability to pass judgement in disputes. In verse twenty three ahead, the word خِطَاب occurs in the meaning of dispute as well.

It is evident from this that for the stability of a government the foremost traits needed in a ruler are that he is replete with wisdom and has the ability to exercise the right judgement. If these traits are not found in a ruler, then the government stands on slippery grounds even though it may possess other means and resources in large quantities. Such a rule is only obtained with a strong relationship with God. Rulers who are devoid of this relationship end up inflicted with the arrogance and haughtiness which is being criticized here. They are the ones who not only are destroyed themselves but also lead their nations to destruction. Handing over the reigns of power to them is like giving over a sword to a naïve person.

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَضْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (٢١)¹⁷

This verse mentions an example of David’s wisdom and justice or in the words of the Qur’ān his trait of فَضَّلَ الْخِطَابَ (passing judgement in disputes). Some points become very evident from this:

Firstly, the poor and the rich were equal in his eyes as far as justice was concerned. During his rule, the poorest of persons could easily obtain his right imposed on the richest of persons.

Secondly, his subjects fully trusted him. People would come to him without any hesitation to have their disputes settled. So much so, if the

16. We had made his kingdom strong, and gave him wisdom and the ability to judge affairs.

17. Has the news of the rivals reached you who entered his chamber by climbing over the wall?

sentinels caused any impediment, they would even scale the walls of his palace to come to his presence; they would boldly present their cases before him and he would decide them with great patience and fortitude; he would not be disturbed in the slightest sense that people had breached his privacy or not properly addressed him or did not care about his guards and sentinels.

Thirdly, the very law in the light of which he would judge others would also be the one on the basis of which he would continue to evaluate his own matters and dealings. If in this process of self-accountability, he would find the slightest of deviation on his part, he would turn to God in penitence and reform the mistake.

While keeping these principle points in mind, let us now reflect on the actual incident.

The style found in the address هَلْ أَتَاكَ not only expresses the importance of the incident but also urges and exhorts the addressee. It is not necessary that one interprets this address in the singular to be directed to the Prophet (sws). It has already been explained at various instances of this exegesis that an address in the singular can also imply plural entities.

The word خَصْم is used for the rival parties of a case. It can imply both singular and plural entities.

Consider next the expression: إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ. The verb تَسَوَّرَ means “to climb a wall.” According to linguistic principles of Arabic, this word encompasses the meaning of دخلوا (they entered). The overall expression would be to the effect: تَسَوَّرُوا الْجِدَارَ وَدَخَلُوا الْمِحْرَابَ (they climbed the wall and entered the mihrāb). The word مِحْرَاب can refer to one of the rooms of David’s palace and the palace itself as well. In Arabic, at times the part refers to the whole.

The whole nature of this incident that can be gauged from these words is that the two rival individuals of a case together with their companions tried to go to David (sws) at a time which was not reserved for hearing such disputes; it was, in fact, the time for rest or for worship. The sentinels at the main gate did not allow them to enter the palace at this wrong time; however, they did not get frustrated and secretly climbed the wall from some other place and entered the palace. Entering the palace of a great ruler in this manner was indeed a very serious offence which entailed a severe punishment in general circumstances; however, since they fully trusted the forbearance of David (sws), they made this audacious move.

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصْمَانِ بَغَى بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ (٢٢)¹⁸

It was but natural that David (sws) became anxious at their manner of entry. So he got worried thinking that these people were thieves or robbers who had covertly entered the palace without coming into the notice of the sentinels. However, these visitors pacified him by saying that they were not his enemies and hence there was no cause of worry for him; they told him that they had come to him as rival parties of a dispute; one of them had been unjust to the other and now they require his verdict and that he should fairly judge between them without showing any bias and show them the straight path in this regard.

These people had landed at a very inappropriate time and the way they chose to come to him was also very unbecoming; the manner in which they conversed was also indecent as is evident from the words لَا تُشْطِطْ. However, they were fully aware of the temperament of their ruler. They well knew that if they speak to him in the wrongest of ways and if they come over to him at the most inopportune time, once they reach him, he will forgive their blemishes if he comes to know that they have come to seek justice. In such a situation, it was their expectation, that he would go on to fairly and squarely decide their dispute. Their hopes materialized cent per cent. When David (sws) was satisfied at the need that brought them to him, he immediately turned his attention to resolve their dispute and totally ignored their blemishes.

If we read about the life of ‘Umar (rta), we find that he too was no different. His door was never closed to the needy. People would stop him on the way and very boldly, in fact, at times very insolently present their petitions. He would hear them out very patiently and attentively and would address their needs without delay.

إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِيَ نَعْجَةً وَاحِدَةً فَقَالَ أَكْفَلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ (٢٣)¹⁹

This verse states the actual details of the dispute which the aggrieved person presented before David (sws). While pointing to his rival, he said

18. When they reached David, he got alarmed. He said: “Do not be alarmed; we are two rivals in a case; one has committed excess against the other; so fairly judge between us and do not be unjust; and guide us to the right path.”

19. This is my brother. He has ninety-nine ewes, and I have only one ewe. Thus he demanded that I should consign this to him as well, and he got the better of me in the argument.

that this is his brother who has ninety-nine ewes and he himself has one; his brother's demand is that he should hand over his ewe to him; for this he fights with him and gets the better of him.

It needs to be kept in mind that in those times the real wealth of that land was goats and ewes. Before he became king, David (sws) too spent his time among his ewes and in shepherding them. It is evident from the annals of that period that the picture of an ewe was engraved on the coins of those times and an ewe was also called *na'jah*. Even if this is not true, it is known that this word was commonly used in those times for wealth and possessions.

The word *الْحِطَابِ فِي الْحِطَابِ* connotes "argument and discussion." Since one of them was a wealthy person and a wealthy person finds supporters very easily, he must have prevailed upon his rival by convincing others in his own favour.

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعَجَتِكَ إِلَىٰ نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لَيَبْغِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا هُمْ وَظَنَّ دَاوُدُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ (٢٤)

The word *سُؤَالِ* here connotes "demand." It is commonly used in this meaning in Arabic. This has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. The preposition *إِلَىٰ* after it shows that it embraces the meaning of *ضَمَّ* (add) or *خَلَطَ* (mix).

As soon as he heard the details of the dispute, David (sws) realized that the wealthy person had been unjust and then declared his own verdict without any bias or concession. He told the aggrieved person that by demanding to hand over his ewe to his flock that person has been grossly unfair. At the same time, David (sws) also remarked that most parties of a case while trying to make their ninety-nine ewes hundred perpetrate this injustice with others. Only they are an exception to this who adhere to faith and do righteous deeds and such people are very few. An element of emphasis and exaggeration is added to the word *قَلِيلٌ* (few) by the

20. David replied: "He has certainly been unjust to you by demanding your ewe for adding it to his flock. And many partners in this manner are unjust to one another; only those are an exception to it who have faith and do good deeds and such people are very few indeed." And David realized that We have tested him; so He sought forgiveness of his Lord and turned to him in penitence fell down on his knees and repented.

addition of the letter: مَا

The words وَظَنَّ دَاوُودُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ direct our attention to the special trait of turning to God in penitence that David (sws) had. In spite of being a king, he was never afflicted with arrogance like many people; he was a person who feared God; thus he evaluated his own situation in the light of this incident and realized one of his own mistakes. This made him feel embarrassed before God and he prostrated before Him seeking His forgiveness.

What was the mistake he made? The Qur'ān has not specified it; it is a secret between David (sws) and his Lord, and hence no one even has the right to find out what it was. It is clear from the words أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ that as soon as David (sws) gave his verdict in the case, he realized that he too was undergoing a similar test. If a person insists on constructing an incident on the basis of these words, then, keeping in mind the circumstances of David (sws), he can suppose that just because of some individual or collective need at times kings need to intervene in the ownership of some asset of others, a similar need must have arisen in David's case. Most kings do not care for anyone in such matters. In order to keep the road to their palaces straight and short they bulldoze the huts of the poor. David (sws) was however a compassionate king; he could not have done such a thing and if there was some desire in his heart to get hold of or intervene in the ownership of an asset belonging to someone, he must have repented after witnessing this incident. It is the quality of a good natured person to learn a lesson from what he sees in others and if a wrong desire arises in him, he must ask for God's forgiveness. This is what farthest can be understood from the Qur'ān. As far as the incidents are concerned which are generally found in our *tafsīr* books, I can only pray that God forgive the authors who mentioned them in their works.

The words وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ refer to both kneeling and prostration. Kneeling is mentioned in words while the word رَاكِعًا signifies prostration. The word أَنَابَ refers to penitence of the heart. Kneeling and prostration are the outward forms of penitence to God. The real spirit is engendered in them through penitence of the heart.

فَعَفَرْنَا لَهُ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِندَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٢٥)

God forgave David (sws) after he sought forgiveness from him, and

21. So We forgave him, and indeed with Us is a favoured place for him and a good fate.

since every true repentance increases the status of a person and every penitence takes him closer to God, hence David's status increased before God.

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ
فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ
الْحِسَابِ (٢٦)²²

After the above-referred to admonition and after David's repentance, God clearly told him that by granting him some authority and sovereignty, He has made him a caliph in this earth; it is a requirement of this position that David (sws) exercise this authority according to the will of the being who bestowed this position to him and that he should justly decide between people; moreover, he should never be lured away by his desires otherwise they will make him deviate from truth and justice; he should also remember that those who turn away from the path of God will be inflicted with a heavy punishment in the Hereafter because they ignored its advent.

The directive given here to David (sws) stands for all the rulers in fact all individuals of this world. Whoever is blessed with authority and sovereignty is blessed with these from God and he shall be accountable about these on the Day of Judgement; he will have to answer God whether he used them according to His will or according to his own desires; those who ignored the Hereafter and followed their desires will face the fate mentioned earlier.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ (٢٧)²³

Once the tale of David (sws) ended on the previous verse, this verse is directed at the addressees of this *sūrah*. They are explained why it is necessary that a day come wherein each person be held accountable

22. "O David! We have made you a caliph in the land; so deal with justice among men and you must not yield to your desire, lest it turn you away from God's path. Those who stray from the path of God shall be sternly punished because they became unmindful of the Day of Reckoning.

23. And it was not in vain that We created the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. This is the estimation of those who professed disbelief; so for those who have disbelieved is the devastation of Hell.

before God. He shall be asked whether he correctly exercised his God-given authority or did it wrongly. It is specified that if a day of judgement does not come, then this would mean that this world is a meaningless and purposeless place in which there is no distinction between virtue and vice, good and evil, truth and falsehood. It is stated that God has not created this world purposelessly. He has in fact created it with truth and in order for the truth to manifest itself the day of judgement was appointed. On this day, each person will be rewarded or punished for his deeds.

The words *كَفَرُوا* الَّذِينَ ظَنُّوا imply that only those people think that this world has been created purposelessly who belie the Hereafter. To them, this world is everything. Since in this world a person is not necessarily punished for his evil deeds nor rewarded for the pious ones, these people think that the Creator does not make any distinction between good and evil.

The words *كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ* قَوْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ state that those who deny the Hereafter and are oblivious of its reward and punishment will face the destruction of Hell.

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ
كَالْفُجَّارِ (٢٨)²⁴

This question expresses wonder: do those people who do not believe in the Hereafter and its reward and punishment think that God will equate the believers with those spread disorder in the earth or He will deal in the same manner with those who fear Him and those who not? In other words, this is what will happen if the Hereafter is not believed in and such a thing cannot be imagined about a God Who is wise, gracious and powerful. It is this reality which Jesus (sws) has explained in his vineyard parables in various styles. He has stated that how is it possible that a master depute his slaves to safeguard His vineyard and then while a few of them commit excesses in it and others diligently do their duty and the master deals equally with both of them. If someone does this, then this can only be either because he is helpless and unaware or is very foolish and unjust – and exalted is the Almighty from both these states.

24. Are We to equate those that have professed faith and did righteous deeds with those who spread anarchy in the land? Or are We to equate the pious with the defiant?

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٢٩)²⁵

The Prophet Muhammad (sws) is addressed here a Book has been revealed to him to remind people of these very facts; it is a blessed Book that enlivens hearts. The purpose of revealing this Book is that men of understanding reflect on its verses and receive a reminder. Its revelation is a great favour of God to His people provided they give up their behaviour of arrogance and conceit and give this Book the importance it deserves. What is said here is the same as what was stated in the first verse of the *sūrah*.

Section III: Verses (30-40)

In the succeeding verses, various incidents from the life of Solomon (sws), the famous son of David (sws), are portrayed. The purpose is to show that he exactly followed the footsteps of his father. God bestowed on him unparalleled power and majesty. However, this did not make him arrogant and spread disorder in the land; in fact, in whatever step he took, he would always fear God and if even a slight blemish would emanate from him, he would prostrate before God while seeking His forgiveness. These incidents are narrated to the leaders of the Quryash to remind and counsel them.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٣٠) إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ (٣١) فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ (٣٢) رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ فطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ (٣٣) وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ (٣٤) قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٣٥) فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ (٣٦) وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاءٍ وَعَوَّاصٍ (٣٧) وَآخِرِينَ مُقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ (٣٨) هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٩) وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَّآبٍ (٤٠)

And We blessed David with Solomon; he was a good person. Indeed, he was very penitent to God. (30)

25. This is an extremely blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that people may ponder on its verses and the wise are reminded by it.

One day in the evening, thorough bred and elegant steeds were brought before him for inspection; so he said: “My love for wealth has distracted me from the remembrance of my Lord until the sun has vanished behind the veil. Bring them back to me!” So he started to strike his sword on their shins and necks. (31-33)

And We put Solomon through a trial and We placed a corpse on his throne. Then he repented. He prayed: “My Lord! Forgive me and bestow upon me such a kingdom which is not worthy for anyone except me. You are the Bountiful Giver.” So We put the wind to his service which blew in harmony at his bidding wherever he intended to go. (34-36)

And unruly jinn too we subjected to his control; and very adept builders and divers and other jinn also that were fettered in chains. (37-38)

All this is Our bestowal uncountable; so if you want you can give it or withhold it. And indeed for him we have a special place of nearness and the best place of return. (39-40)

Explanation

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٣٠)²⁶

Solomon (sws) is mentioned in relation to David (sws) in a manner as if he was given by God as a gift to David (sws) for his virtuous deeds.

The expression نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ states the greatest quality of this great son: he was a good person. It needs to be kept in mind that none of his miracles and marvels with which books are replete is mentioned here. If anything is mentioned then it is that he was a wonderful human being. The real quality of human being is that he becomes such a devoted servant to his Lord that God too bears witness to this trait of his. If a person is able to achieve this perfection, then all other qualities of his ensue from this basic quality, and if he does not have this trait, then if anyone is even able to acquire the ring of Solomon (sws), this has no value in the sight of God.

The attribute إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ referred to here is precisely the same as was mentioned for David (sws) earlier. In other words, the son was a mirror image of the father as regards this attribute. The real majesty of a human being is that his heart's attention is always directed to God, and if there is any blemish in this regard he scurries back to God in the blink of an eye. It is this penitent attitude which the Almighty likes most in His

26. And We blessed David with Solomon; he was a good person. Indeed, he was very penitent to God.

creatures. A person is able to gain much more than what he loses because of a sin if he truly repents later.

إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْهِيَادُ (٣١) فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ (٣٢) رُدُّوَهَا عَلَيَّ فَنُفِيقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ (٣٣)²⁷

Just as an example of the penitent nature of David (sws) is mentioned earlier, an example of the penitent nature of Solomon (sws) is presented here in these verses. Readers may first like to understand the real picture of the incident in simple words. Later they may evaluate its parts.

What becomes evident from the words of the Qur'ān is that some day late in the afternoon a pack of thorough bred horses were paraded before Solomon (sws) for inspection. Horses were large in number and the inspection was a very absorbing affair. Solomon (sws) became so deeply involved in it that the sun set and the 'aṣr prayer was missed. When he remembered that he had missed the prayer that he could not restrain himself on this huge blemish. He thought that the love of this world made him forget the remembrance of God. He was so overwhelmed with remorse that he asked the horses to be brought back to him and started to strike their necks and shanks with his sword because it was their love which had made him forget God's remembrance.

This is case of a person being overwhelmed with emotions while the motive is very noble. This makes it a very laudable thing; however, since in this state a person may exceed the balanced way taught by the *sharī'ah*, this attitude is not acceptable to religion. A similar situation arose when 'Umar (rta) was overcome by emotions when he heard the news of the Prophet's (sws) death. Thus when Abu Bakr (rta) chastened him by directing his attention to certain verses of the Qur'ān, he regained his composure. It is possible that Solomon (sws) too realized this folly of his own or God may have made him realize it, though the Qur'ān does not mention either. Here the step he took is mentioned to express his passionate penitence and overwhelming desire to repent. No doubt, the incident depicts these glorious traits in a very clear manner.

Consider next the words: إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْهِيَادُ. The word *صَافِنَات* refers to a special breed of thorough bred horses while the word

27. One day in the evening, thorough bred and elegant steeds were brought before him for inspection; so he said: "My love for wealth has distracted me from the remembrance of my Lord until the sun has vanished behind the veil. Bring them back to me!" So he started to strike his sword on their shins and necks.

جَيَاد refers in general to good quality horses. In other words, these horses were good not only with regard to their pedigree but also with regard to their qualities. The Torah mentions details of these horses of Solomon (sws).

In the verse فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ the word أَحْبَبْتُ encompasses the meaning of evasion and heedlessness, and the word عَنْ points to this.

The subject of the verb تَوَارَتْ which is الشَّمْسُ is suppressed here. In Arabic, verbs and pronouns occur in such a way for known and famous objects. The subject of a verb or the antecedent of a pronoun is understood through contextual indications. Here the word الْعِشِيِّ is a contextual indication to the subject of the verb تَوَارَتْ and hence it was not stated in words.

Before the verb فَقَالَ some part of the discourse is suppressed viz: Solomon (sws) got so deeply involved in the inspection of the parade that the time for the ‘aṣr prayer passed. When he realized what had happened, he remarked: “I have preferred the love of wealth over the remembrance of God until the sun hid and I was deprived of my ‘aṣr prayer.” Obviously, this statement was an expression of sorrow from him. Even though the horses he was inspecting had been bred for *jihād* and the inspection itself was a part of the activities of *jihād*, yet since the prayer occupies the most fundamental position in religion it cannot be sacrificed except in compelling circumstances. I have dwelt upon this issue in detail at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*.

It is evident from contextual indications that the expression ذِكْرُ رَبِّي refers to the ‘aṣr prayer. This is because in الْعِشِيِّ ie late afternoon, only the ‘aṣr prayer is offered. The question arises: Did the ‘aṣr prayer also exist in the Jews? It is evident from the verse under discussion that they offered some prayer in the late afternoon before the sun went down. If the ‘aṣr prayer is not found in the Torah, then this does not matter because the Qur’ān in explicit words has said that the Jews were guilty of wasting the prayer.²⁸ The times of prayer prescribed by Islam are so natural and logical that the heart bears witness that these same times must have been prescribed by other religions but they squandered them by differing in them.

Here it may be kept in mind that it was regarding the ‘aṣr prayer that the Prophet Muhammad (sws) and his companions were faced with a

28. Thus about the Jews the Qur’ān says: أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ (٥٩: ١٩) (They wasted the prayer, (19:59)).

trial during the battle of the ditch. I have already alluded to some aspects of the importance of the ‘aṣr prayer while explaining the term صلاة الوسطى in Sūrah Baqarah (2:238).

The antecedent of the accusative pronoun in رُدُّوْهَا عَلَيَّ is horses referred to in الصَّافِنَاتُ الْحَيَاتُ. The verb مَسَحَ is also commonly used to mean killing and the verbal noun occurs to emphasize the suppressed verb. The actual construction is يَمْسَحُ مَسْحًا

The words فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ refer to the step undertaken by Solomon (sws) while being overwhelmed by emotions of remorse. He ordered for the horses to be brought back. It seems that Solomon (sws) was afflicted with these emotions once the horses had gone back to their stables. He thought that it was these horses which were the cause of him forgetting God. He thus had them called back and started to strike their shins and necks with his sword. It is very clear that these words portray him being overwhelmed with emotions. The word طَفِقَ refers to this. The only thing that is evident from this verse is that Solomon (sws) did swing his swords a few times. It does not become evident that he killed all the horses and this was not possible as well because it is evident from the Torah that they were in hundreds. It seems he swung the sword a few times and then realized what he was doing after which he stopped. Since this incident reflects his penitence in a memorable way, the Qur’ān has mentioned it. A similar incident took place with regard to ‘Umar (rta) to which we have referred to earlier. Such incidents which reflect a person being overwhelmed with emotions cannot be cited as exemplars for others. Hence sufis which have adduced the allowance of tearing apart the apparel from the chest from this incident are not correct in their inference.

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ (٣٤) قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٣٥)²⁹

This is another incident that reflects Solomon’s penitent attitude. Since this incident has also been portrayed in a distorted manner in our *tafsīr* books, let us first try to understand the incident in simple words. Later,

29. And We put Solomon through a trial and We placed a corpse upon his throne. Then he repented. He prayed: “My Lord! Forgive me and bestow upon me such a kingdom which is not worthy for anyone except me. You are the Bountiful Giver.”

readers can reflect on the words of the verses.

It is evident from history that once Solomon (sws) was put through an extreme trial: his enemies attacked and seized many of his territories and created so much disorder in the remaining territories that the system of governance was severely disrupted. Only the central territory of his kingdom remained in his hands where he had to remain confined. This was a trial from God. Solomon (sws) was a kindhearted king. He thought that God has punished him for some blemish. This thought magnified his sorrow and in this state of helplessness he became a like a lifeless skeleton on his throne. At that time, he very humbly invoked the Almighty to forgive his sins and prayed that though he was no longer worthy of God's favours and blessings, he in spite of this be granted such a kingdom which no one who has committed such a sin is worthy of.

The expression وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ means: "We put Solomon through a trial." This trial is an established practice of God. It is not necessary that this trial was the result of some sin committed by Solomon (sws). Tests and trial befall all prophets and messengers of God. They are meant to test their patience or gratitude. Solomon (sws) was put through a similar trial and since he was a king, this trial came through his kingship.

The words وَالْقَيْنَا عَلَىٰ كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا concisely, yet very comprehensively portray the trial which Solomon (sws) faced. Initially, his kingdom spanned a large area and he powerfully ruled it. Later the Almighty placed his lifeless skeleton on his throne. The word جَسَدًا metaphorically alludes to the helplessness and sorrowful state of Solomon (sws). The implication is that his rule became confined to only the central territory of his kingdom and circumstances made him so helpless and sad as if only his body remained and the soul left him. Deliberation will show that there could not have been a better portrayal than this to convey the helplessness and sadness of a king.

The words ثُمَّ أَنَابَ say that even in these circumstances, Solomon (sws) did not show despair in God; on the contrary, he realized that this might have happened to some sin he may have done. He thus turned to God in penitence.

The words قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ بَعْدِي do not mean that Solomon (sws) had prayed to God to grant him a kingdom which no one after him should have. Solomon actually meant that though because of his sin he does not deserve any kingdom; yet out of His grace, God should grant him such a kingdom which neither he nor any one after him deserves.

The words إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ of Solomon (sws) refer to the fact that God

graciously gives; so in spite of his blemishes, he hopes that God will not deprive him of His grants.

The real emphasis in this prayer is not to receive an unparalleled majestic kingdom but on a kingdom which a person is not entitled to. Solomon (sws) actually meant that in spite of his folly he be granted a kingdom which no one after him is worthy of. The strong realization of his mistake found in this prayer bears testimony to Solomon’s humility and penitence. All kindhearted rulers always regard the calamities which visit their countries to be a result of their sins. Various narratives say that in the times of ‘Umar (rta) a great famine struck. It was famously called ‘*Ām al-rimādah*. All the time during this famine, ‘Umar would weep profusely and pray: O God! Let not the ummah of Muḥammad be destroyed from my hands.

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءَ حَيْثُ أَصَابَ (٣٦)³⁰

The style of this verse points to the fact that after undergoing the aforementioned trial, Solomon (sws) was granted such control of the winds by the grace of Almighty that no one ever had. I have mentioned in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anbiyā’ and of certain other *sūrahs* that the maritime power of Solomon (sws) was the greatest of his times and his naval fleet was also the most powerful of his times. This is because to control the sea breezes, he had developed the sailing system of a ship so much that his ships would travel long distances in all types of waters. Scanty or strong winds would not affect their passage. These ships would easily glide through most tempestuous of winds and would continue to sail without any hindrance even if they would not get a favourable wind. Just as David (sws) made tremendous progress viz a viz the iron industry and afforded himself an unconquerable land force, in a similar manner Solomon (sws) made great progress in the sailing system of ships and strengthened his naval power beyond compare.

The word تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءَ حَيْثُ أَصَابَ means “to set a target,” just as there is the idiom: أَصَابَ السَّهْمَ. In other words, whichever territory Solomon (sws) would set as the destination of his ships, they would depart to it without any hindrance and without waiting for the right season. This is because the wind was in his control; whenever he wanted, he would make it favourable for his journey.

30. So We put the wind to his service which blew in harmony at his bidding wherever he intended to go.

وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاءٍ وَعَوَّاصٍ (٣٧) وَأَخْرَيْنَ مُقَرَّرِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ (٣٨)³¹

Besides subjecting the winds to his control, the Almighty had also blessed Solomon (sws) with the power to control rebellious jinn who he would employ not only in constructing buildings but also as deep sea divers who would bring back a lot of useful wealth from the bottom of the sea. The word الشَّيَاطِينَ refers to the devils among the jinn. It is evident from this that Solomon (sws) would only subject the rebellious jinn to his control and would leave alone the righteous among them. In my opinion, the word كُلَّ in كُلَّ بَنَّاءٍ وَعَوَّاصٍ is to emphasize both the attributes. In other words, he had subjected very efficient builder and very adept diver to his control.

The words مُقَرَّرِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ refer to the fact that another faction of the jinn fettered in chains would be available to him as reserve force which he could employ when needed.

هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٣٩)³²

The expression بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ is connected to هَذَا عَطَاؤُنَا. In other words, these great favours are far beyond the imagination and expectation of Solomon (sws). He could not have thought of them even in his dreams.

The words فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ signify the authority Solomon (sws) had – the authority which every master has over his assets and every king has over his kingdom. These words do not mean that if Solomon (sws) desires, he can spend on people and if he does not, then he can withhold his wealth from them – he has both options. The words in fact mean that he has the freedom to choose between both of these options; however, if he chooses generosity then he will fulfill his obligation towards the wealth he has been blessed with and will be rewarded for it. However, if he guards his treasure like a snake he will see the fate of this behaviour when he goes to God who gave him all this.

The way Solomon (sws) has been addressed here in these words is exactly similar to the following words addressed to Dhū al-Qarnayn:

قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِمَّا أَنْ تُعَذِّبَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا (١٨: ٨٦)

31. And unruly jinn too we subjected to his control; and very adept builders and divers and other jinn also that were fettered in chains.

32. All this is Our bestowal uncountable; so if you want you can give it or withhold it.

We said: O Dhū al-Qarnayn! [We have given them in your control; so] if you want you can punish them and if you want you can be kind to them. (18:86)

Some people have understood the following message from the verse under discussion: after blessing all this to Solomon (sws), God gave him the license to do whatever he wants to and he would not be held accountable for whatever he does. This understanding is totally incorrect. Notwithstanding other things, one may take a look at the directive given to David (sws) in verse twenty six earlier in. One may see that how can the son be granted such freedom after the father has been given such a directive.

وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَّآبٍ (٤٠)³³

The verse implies that after receiving so much wealth, Solomon (sws) was not afflicted with arrogance and conceit; on the contrary, he was penitent person. For this reason, he will be given a special status of proximity to God and the best of abodes.

Section IV: Verses (41-64)

In the succeeding verses, in order to assure Muḥammad (sws) some prophets are mentioned who faced great trials in their life. These prophets never despaired or lost hope; they courageously faced adverse circumstances and resorted to God for their afflictions. The Almighty alleviated their bothers and blessed them with His favours. Later this discussion is concluded by saying that the best of abodes with God are for His virtuous people. After this, the fate met by the virtuous and the wrongdoers is described.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَيُّ مَسَّنِي الشَّيْطَانُ بِضَبٍّ وَعَذَابٍ (٤١) ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ (٤٢) وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٤٣) وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْثًا فَاضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنَثْ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٤٤) وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ

33. And indeed for him we have a special place of nearness and the best place of return.

(٤٥) إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (٤٦) وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٧) وَادْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِّنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٨) هَذَا ذِكْرٌ وَإِنَّا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لَحُسْنٌ مَّآبٍ (٤٩) جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ مُّفْتَحَةٌ لَهُمُ الْأَبْوَابُ (٥٠) مُتَكَبِّينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ (٥١) وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ أَثَرَابٌ (٥٢) هَذَا مَا تُوعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٥٣) إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَفَادٍ (٥٤) هَذَا وَإِنَّا لِلطَّاغِينَ لَشَرٌّ مَّآبٍ (٥٥) جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَنَبِّئُكَ الْيَمَادُ (٥٦) هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَغَسَّاقٌ (٥٧) وَآخِرُ مِنْ شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ (٥٨) هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَّعَكُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ (٥٩) قَالُوا بَلْ أَنْتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ أَنْتُمْ قَدَّمْتُمُوهُ لَنَا فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ (٦٠) قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَنْ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ (٦١) وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمْ مِّنَ الْأَشْرَارِ (٦٢) أَخَذْنَا هُمْ سِخْرِيًّا أَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمْ الْأَبْصَارُ (٦٣) إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ (٦٤)

And recall Our servant Job when he called out to his Lord: “Satan has afflicted me with great sorrow and worry.” We said to him: “Stamp your feet upon the earth; this water is cool for bathing and for drinking also.” And We blessed him with his wife and children and like them more with them: To bless them from Ourselves and to remind the prudent. “And take a bunch of twigs and strike yourself with it and do not break your oath.” We found him full of patience. A good person! Indeed, he was very penitent. (41-44)

And recall Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were men of might and vision. For a special mission – reminding of the Hereafter – We had deputed them. And they are with us among chosen and noble people. (45-47)

And recall Ishmael, al-Yasa‘, and Dhū al-Kifl. Each of them is among the best. (48)

This is a reminder and indeed for the God-fearing there is a good abode: the gardens of Eden, whose gates shall be opened to them. They shall recline in them and would demand many fruits and drinks there. And with them will be bashful houris of the same age. This is the thing for which you would be given glad tidings for the Day of Accountability. This is our sustenance which will never finish. (49-54)

This is on the one hand, and [on the other] for the rebellious there is a very bad abode: they shall enter Hell. What an evil place it is! Here is scalding water and pus. Thus these people should taste them and there will be other things as well of similar sort. (55-58)

This group is also set to enter Hell with you. The curse of God be on them. They are to enter Hell. They will reply: “In fact, the Curse of God be on you. You were responsible for what has happened to us.” Thus, what an evil abode it will be! They will say: “Lord, inflict on those who brought this fate upon us a twofold punishment in Hell.” (59-61)

And they will say: “What is the matter! We are not able to see those whom we used to regard as miscreants. Did we regard them a mere joke or is it that our eyes missing are them?” Indeed, this bickering between the companions of Hell is a certain event. (62-64)

Explanation

وَأَذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ (٤١)³⁴

The trials suffered by Job (sws) have already been discussed in detail in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Anbiyā’. Here only those things will be discussed which relate specifically to this *sūrah*. All the trials a person goes through are at the bidding of God; however, one of their causes is Satan as well. Hence, as far as intention and will are concerned, trials are ascribed to God; but with regard to their reason they are ascribed to Satan. It is because of that aspect the Job (sws) attributed his sorrow and affliction to Satan. It is evident from the Book of Job in the Bible that Job (sws) possessed great wealth and majesty. In spite of this, he was very sympathetic to the poor and very austere in worshipping the Almighty. Satan and his agents were very jealous of this state of his and they started a propaganda campaign against him. They would say that what great achievement has been reaped by Job (sws) if he worships the Almighty day and night because a person who has so much wealth and means can easily afford this involvement. What else can he do? They would continue with this vicious campaign by saying that only if he is deprived of these things by God and he still continues with such devotion in worship would they really acknowledge him as a great human being. At last, God deprived Job (sws) of all these things. He neither had any wealth left with him nor any sons and grandsons nor other assets that had afforded him with such grandeur. However, in spite of this great affliction he did not despair; on the contrary, he fell down in prostration before his Lord and said: “I was born naked from the womb of my mother and naked will I go to my Lord.” It is mentioned in the Book of Job (sws) that after this God said to Satan that the latter had seen how Job (sws) still remain God’s obedient servant in spite of being deprived

34. And recall Our servant Job when he called out to his Lord: “Satan has afflicted me with great sorrow and worry.”

from everything. Satan replied that this was because the deprivation related to wealth and children and he was patient in their loss; however, he will only be convinced if Job (sws) is inflicted with great bodily harm and he still shows such devotion in worship. So after this, Job's body was afflicted with such harms that one shudders if one reads their details in the Bible. Yet in spite of this, he turned towards God in even greater devotion and he defeated Satan even in this trial. After this defeat of Satan, the Almighty blessed Job (sws) which much more than was taken away from him.

I have referred to these details from the Bible so that the right aspect of the words *وَعَذَابٍ مُّسْتَسِيٍّ الشَّيْطَانُ بِضُصٍ* of Job (sws) is understood and that is the extent of afflictions he had to bear from Satan to prove that he was faithful to God and the immense struggle he had launched against Satan.

The word *نُصِبٍ* means "tiredness, sorrow and mishap" and the word *عَذَابٍ* refers to body ailments which took the shape of various diseases. Both these words embrace all harms with which Job (sws) was afflicted.

ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ (٤٢)³⁵

The Almighty does not try a person beyond a certain limit. Thus as soon as Job's trial was over, his supplication was accepted without delay. He was told to go to a certain place and strike it with his foot; at this, a spring would sprout whose water would be cold for his bathing as well as for drinking. This was the cure suggested to him for the skin diseases he had been afflicted with as a result of which he would sit in a heap of ashes and rub his body with blocks of clay.

Sprouting of a spring by the striking of a foot is not an improbable thing. On canal and rivulet banks, the water bed is close to the surface of high grounds. A little digging by the hand or the foot makes the water immediately gush forth from the surface. It was such a stream which the Almighty made a cure for Job (sws).

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٤٣)³⁶

After delivering Job (sws) from his bodily afflictions, the Almighty restored his family back to him and with them a majesty and grace of

35. We said to him: "Stamp your feet upon the earth; this water is cool for bathing and for drinking also."

36. And We blessed him with his wife and children and like them more with them: To bless them from Ourselves and to remind the prudent.

equal magnitude including an army of servants and slaves. During this period of trial, some of his family and kin were lost and some died. His servants and slaves were also devastated. Once the time of his trial was complete, relatives who had been separated from him were brought back to him and those who died were substituted by God by better ones. Also besides wealth, his servants and slaves were also restored to him.

The words *رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَى لَأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ* show that God did all this because He wanted to bless one of his upright and noble and also because this dealing of God becomes a reminder for men of understanding. This latter has many aspects of reminding. For example:

- God puts to test the obedience of His servants and only those succeed in his eyes who succeed in this test.
- There is a limit set for this test in the eyes of God which is never exceeded.
- Penitence towards God is a real means of success.

وَحُذِّبِيكَ ضِعْفًا فَاصْرَبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنَثْ إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٤٤)

It seems that during this period of trial, some thought passed the mind of Job (sws) which was against patience and penitence. It is on this thought that he decided on oath to punish himself by inflicting a certain amount of lashes and did not determine their amount. Though this promise of Job (sws) was a result of his humility to and love for God but it is not allowed for people to put themselves through undue difficulty even though the purpose is to please God. For this reason, God has absolved them of fulfilling such responsibilities. However, since the matter of swearing an oath has great significance and on it rests promises and words given, Job (sws) was directed to take some twigs equal to the no of lashes he had sworn to hit himself with and strike himself with their bunch so that the oath he had sworn is not broken and is fulfilled in its ceremonial sense.

Islam prescribes the fulfillment of a directive in a symbolic manner if it cannot be fulfilled in its actual manner. It is on this basis that a person can do dry ablution (*tayammum*) if water is not available, and can restrict himself to gestures if he cannot kneel and prostrate in the prayer. Job (sws) could have been directed to give atonement but at that time he was neither in a position to atone physically nor financially. He had been

37. “And take a bunch of twigs and strike yourself with it and do not break your oath.” We found him full of patience. A good person! Indeed, he was very penitent.

totally deprived of wealth and sickness had totally debilitated him so much that he could not even fast. It was because of this situation that the Almighty showed lenience to him.

Our exegetes have generally understood that he had sworn to administer a hundred lashes to his wife but the Qur'ān has not referred to this at all anywhere and concomitant indications are also against this interpretation. This is because it is evident from various narratives that in his times of trial, the only person who day and night served and attended to Job (sws) was his wife. It is beyond reason to punish such a faithful wife.

Our jurists have tried to deduce the allowance of legal subterfuge from this incident. This is a topic that needs independent treatment. God willing, I shall deal with it at length at an appropriate place. Here I would like to confine the discussion to the context of the verse only.

It is evident from the words *إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا* that the latent thought on which he had sworn the afore-mentioned oath related to Satan trying to test his patience but did not succeed and Job (sws) showed exemplary patience.

Consider next the last part of the verse: *نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ*. Exactly the same words have been mentioned by the Qur'ān to praise Solomon (sws). This sheds light on the harmony between all the incidents. Also becomes evident the reality that to become a good person in the sight of God does not mean that sinful thoughts should not cross a person's mind; what is needed is that a person turns to God as soon as he realizes his folly and then perseveres on the truth.

وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِيَ الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ (٤٥) إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ
مَخَالِصَةً ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ (٤٦) وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٧)³⁸

These verses are a reminder of Abraham (sws), Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws). They are the actual proponents of the guidance from among the Israelites. They were invested with patriarchal authority and spiritual insight also. That is why they are called *أُولِيَ الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ* which means that God had blessed them with both power and insight. If a person does not have insight with power, he becomes a dangerous animal. It is further said that the Almighty deputed them on the special mission of reminding

38. And recall Our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who were men of might and vision. For a special mission – reminding of the Hereafter – We had deputed them. And they are with us among chose and noble people.

people of the Hereafter, and they were among His noble and chosen ones.

The word ذِكْرِي الدَّارِ is a permutative (*badal*) of خَالِصَة, and the word الدَّارِ (abode) denotes the abode of the Hereafter because it is the real abode; this world is a temporary resting place. The real mission of the prophets of God is reminding of the Hereafter because it is this reminding which is the key to all success. If he becomes oblivious of the Hereafter, he consigns his reins to Satan, and if he remains mindful of it, then in spite of blemishes he remains on the right path.

وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ (٤٨)³⁹

The prophet Dhū al-Kifl has already been mentioned earlier in Sūrah Anbiyā' verse eighty five. There he was mentioned with Ishmael (sws) and Idrīs (sws) and the common trait of all these prophets was patience. Here instead of Idrīs (sws), al-Yasa' is mentioned. There are two prophets in the Bible who have a similar name. One is Isaiah (eighth century BC) and the other is Elisha (ninth century BC).⁴⁰ I have already presented my opinion about Dhū al-Kifl in Sūrah Anbiyā'. The context in which this verse occurs is also a mention of patience. This trait is common to all prophets of God; however, the ones mentioned hold a distinction in this trait.

هَذَا ذِكْرٌ وَإِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ لَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ (٤٩)⁴¹

This verse summarizes the whole discussion once the accounts of the afore-mentioned prophets have been described. It is stated that this is a reminder. In other words, these are not merely tales of the past; they contain many lessons and advice. It should also be borne in mind that success with God lies for those who fear Him; for those who show arrogance on listening to the advice of the counsel-laden Book of God and then reject it is disgrace and humiliation. In order to understand the sequence of the discourse, readers may take a look at the first verse of the *sūrah*.

جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ مُمْتَحَةٌ لَهُمْ الْأَبْوَابُ (٥٠) مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ وَشَرَابٍ

39. And recall Ishmael, al-Yasa', and Dhū al-Kifl. Each of them is among the best.

40. The periods stated by the author in which these prophets lived are incorrect and have been corrected here. (*Translator*)

41. This is a reminder and indeed for the God-fearing there is a good abode:

(٥١) وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ أَثَرَابٌ (٥٢) هَذَا مَا تُوْعَدُونَ لِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٥٣) إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَفَادٍ (٥٤)⁴²

This is a description of the “best abode” referred to by the Qur’ān in the previous verse by the words: حُسْنُ مَآبٍ. It is said that there will be gardens of Eden for them whose gates would have already been opened for them. This is similar to the opening of doors while waiting for the arrival of a respected guest. Thus the keepers of Paradise would be waiting to welcome them in.

The word شَرَابٌ refers to “drinks”. The dwellers of Paradise will recline on thrones and would be asking for all kinds of fruits and drinks from the attendants of Paradise.

The expression قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ refers to beautiful women who are bashful and chaste. In Arabia and at all other places of the world, this trait is considered to be the greatest quality of a woman among civilized and cultured people. The word أَثَرَابٌ means “of the same age”. In other words, as completion of favour on them, they will be provided with bashful women of the same age.

The verses (٥٣) إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَفَادٍ (٥٤) allude to the fact that after these favours are bestowed on the dwellers of Paradise, it shall be said to them that the favours they had been promised for this Day are now in their presence; God has fulfilled His promise; whatever, these people have received will continue to increase and there shall be no fear that these favours will end.

هَذَا وَإِنَّ لِلطَّاغِينَ لَشَرَّ مَآبٍ (٥٥)⁴³

The verse implies that while on the one hand there will be favours and beautiful women, on the other hand there will be an evil abode for the arrogant and the rebellious. The arrogant refer to the people who are mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah* by the words: بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ. In other words, they are the ones who instead of inclining

42. The gardens of Eden, whose gates shall be opened to them. They shall recline in them and would demand many fruits and drinks there. And with them will be bashful houris of the same age. This is the thing for which you would be given glad tidings for the Day of Accountability. This is our sustenance which will never finish.

43. This is on the one hand, and [on the other] for the rebellious there is a very bad abode:

themselves towards God after being reminded make fun of it and dispute with God's messenger.

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ (٥٦)⁴⁴

This a description of the “evil abode” mentioned in the previous verse. The word يَصْلَوْنَهَا refers to the fact that it is not that they will have a glimpse of Hell from far off; they will be admitted into it. And what an evil abode it is in which they will enter.

هَذَا فَلْيَذُوقُوهُ حَمِيمٌ وَغَسَّاقٌ (٥٧) وَآخَرُ مِنْ شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ (٥٨)⁴⁵

The word حَمِيمٌ refers to boiling water, and غَسَّاقٌ means “pus”. The first verse states that they will be gestured to taste these things. Next, after mentioning two detestable things it is stated that they there will various other detestable things as well that are not worthy of mention. It may be noted that these things will be provided as the “first feast” (*nuzul*). The real punishment will start later.

هَذَا فَوْجٌ مُّقْتَحِمٌ مَعَكُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِهِمْ إِنَّهُمْ صَالُوا النَّارِ (٥٩)⁴⁶

The word الطَّاعِينَ used in verse fifty five testifies that the reference is to the active and die-hard adversaries among the disbelievers. Now in this verse it is being said that groups of their followers will be brought before them and they will be told that that these followers too will enter Hell with them. The leaders will immediately reply: At last! They [the followers] too ended up in Hell.

قَالُوا بَلْ أَنْتُمْ لَا مَرْحَبًا بِكُمْ أَنْتُمْ قَدْ مَتَمُّوهُ لَنَا فَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ (٦٠)⁴⁷

The followers will angrily curse their leaders who led them to this fate. It needs to be kept in mind that the *mubtadā'* (inchoative) has been repeated and the second occurrence is separated from the first by a parenthetical sentence. This style reflects anger of the speaker on every

44. They shall enter Hell. What an evil place it is!

45. Here is scalding water and pus. Thus these people should taste them and there will be other things as well of similar sort.

46. This group is also set to enter Hell with you. The curse of God be on them. They are to enter Hell.

47. They will reply: “In fact, Curse of God be on you. You were responsible for what has happened to us.” Thus, what an evil abode it will be!

word uttered. The words *فَبِئْسَ الْفَرَارُ* will be said longingly from their mouths implying what a dreadful fate they were responsible of taking these followers to. These words can also be interpreted to be spoken by God as an overall comment. In both cases, the meaning would not be much different.

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا مَنْ قَدَّمَ لَنَا هَذَا فَزِدْهُ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا فِي النَّارِ (٦١)⁴⁸

After this, the followers will pray to God to give two-fold punishment to those who were responsible for bringing them to doom and brought them to this destination by leading them astray.

وَقَالُوا مَا لَنَا لَا نَرَى رِجَالًا كُنَّا نَعُدُّهُمْ مِّنَ الْأَشْرَارِ (٦٢) أَتَّخَذْنَا هُمْ سِخْرِيًّا أَمْ زَاغَتْ عَنْهُمْ الْأَبْصَارُ (٦٣)⁴⁹

Subsequently, a question that will arise among them will be about the whereabouts of people whom they counted as miscreants – who were enemies of their ancestral religion, who showed disrespect to their deities and who tried to dismember their national unity. They will further contemplate whether they made fun of these people merely and regarded them as those who create disorder merely as a prank even though they were among the righteous or is that they too are present there but cannot be seen. This question will probably be posed by those people in this world who knew that the Muslims whom their leaders were condemning and harassing were noble souls yet because these people were over-awed by their leaders they did not have the guts to say what they thought as the truth with regard to these Muslims.

إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَحَقٌّ تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ (٦٤)⁵⁰

The antecedent of *ذَلِكَ* is *تَخَاصُمُ أَهْلِ النَّارِ*. The word *تَخَاصُمُ* means “mutual debate and quarrel”. The verse states that the debate and quarrel between the dwellers of Paradise which has been mentioned above is a certain event and should not be thought of as something hypothetical. Today

48. And they will say: “Lord, inflict on those who brought this fate upon us a twofold punishment in Hell.”

49. And they will say: “What is the matter! We are not able to see those whom we used to regard as miscreants. Did we make them a mere joke or is it that our eyes missing are them?”

50. Indeed, this bickering between the companions of Hell is a certain event.

those who in their opposition to the truth have become leaders and followers of one another should contemplate whatever they do keeping in mind this fate.

Section V (Verses 65-88)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. Initially, the Prophet (sws) is asked to declare that he is a warner and that he is informing people of a horrible day; when that day arrives, no one except God, the one and only, will be able to benefit people; the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was to warn people of that day which he has; it was not his responsibility to make people accept faith forcibly; people who are disputing with him out of arrogance and haughtiness should bear in mind that this is not the way of the prophets of God and the righteous; it is, in fact, the way of Satan and his followers and they will face the very fate which the Almighty had ordained for them in the very beginning.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمَا مِن إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٦٥) رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٦٦) قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٧) أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ (٦٨) مَا كَانَ لِي مِن عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ الْأَعْلَىٰ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٦٩) إِن يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧٠) إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن طِينٍ (٧١) فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (٧٢) فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ (٧٣) إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤) قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِيَدَيَّ اسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ (٧٥) قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ (٧٦) قَالَ فَاهْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (٧٧) وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٧٨) قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمٍ يُبْعَثُونَ (٧٩) قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ (٨٠) إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (٨١) قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٢) إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٨٣) قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقُّ أَقُولُ (٨٤) لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٥) قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ (٨٦) إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧) وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ نَبَأُهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ (٨٨)

Say: "I am only an informer and there is no god except God, the One, the Mighty. He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all that is

between them; the Dominant and the Forgiving.” Say: “That is a great news; you are evading it.” (65-68)

I had no knowledge of the *malā-i a‘lā* when they must have been fighting. It is only because I am an open warner that revelations are sent down to me. (69-70)

Bear in mind when your Lord said to the angels: “I am creating a human from clay. Then when I have fashioned him and have breathed My spirit into him, prostrate yourselves before him.” So, all the angels prostrated themselves before him except Satan. He showed arrogance and became among the disbelievers. “Satan!” said He, ‘What stopped you from prostrating before that which I created from My own hands? Are you too proud, or do you deem yourself superior?’ Satan replied: “I am superior to him. You created me from fire and him from clay.”⁵¹ God ordered: “Be gone because you are accursed! And My curse shall remain on you until the Day of Reckoning.” He replied: ‘Lord! Give me respite till the Day people will be raised to life.’ He said: “Respite has been granted to you till a prescribed time.” “I swear by Your glory,’ said Satan, ‘that I will lead them all astray except your servants who you have selected.’ God replied: “This is the truth then and I speak nothing but the truth that I will surely fill Hell with you and all among those who are your followers.” (71-85)

Say: “Neither do I demand any recompense from you nor am I among those who pretend. This is only a reminder to mankind; and before long you shall know of the news it has given.” (86-88)

Explanation

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنْذِرٌ وَمَا مِنِّ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ (٦٥)⁵²

The Almighty in this verse is directing the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) to tell his addressees that he is one who is forewarning them of what is to come; he has no further obligation in this regard; if they persist with their stubbornness, they will see its consequences. If they, on the basis of intercession of other deities have become indifferent to that day, then they should clearly listen up that except for God Almighty there is no God. The word قَهَّارُ has been explained at an appropriate place of this *tafsīr*. It means One who controls everything. In other words, all His creation is under His control; He is not someone helpless so that He may

51. The author has missed translating a part of this verse. I have translated it keeping in view his *tafsīr* of this verse. (Translator)

52. Say: “I am only an informer and there is no god except God, the One, the Mighty.

require the help of other deities in order to maintain His sovereignty.

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ (٦٦)⁵³

This verse explains the attribute رَبُّ. He alone is the master of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. He is also الْعَزِيزُ and الْغَفَّارُ. The former attribute means that He is dominant and powerful; no one can dare escape His grasp. At the same time, another attribute of God is that He is غَفَّارٌ. Hence those who are worthy of His forgiveness and mercy will find Him ever-disposed to mercy; there is not the slightest fear of any injustice or oppression from Him so that deities of the disbelievers would be needed to redress this situation.

قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ (٦٧) أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ (٦٨)⁵⁴

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to tell his addressees that what he is warning them of is not something ordinary; it is a very significant event; however, these addressees are not paying heed to this event and making fun of his warnings.

مَا كَانَ لِي مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ الْأَعْلَى إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٦٩) إِنْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِلَّا أَنْمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ (٧٠)⁵⁵

These verses convey to the Prophet's addressees through his tongue that they should not think that he is bluffing them by calling himself an open warner and in order to over-awe them is narrating to them the altercation of the companions of Hell. How could he have knowledge of that unseen world? It is only that God is informing him through divine revelation that he should forewarn them of the horrors of this day the way open warners do; otherwise he is not someone who has knowledge of God's domain; he is merely warning them in a clear manner. I have explained the term نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ at an appropriate instance of this *tafsīr*. Here the implication is that God has informed the Prophet of events hidden in the veil of future so that he can warn his addressees in such a manner as if he is witnessing these events.

53. He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; the Dominant and the Forgiving."

54. Say: "That is a great news; you are evading it."

55. I had no knowledge of the *malā-i a'lā* when they must have been fighting. It is only because I am an open warner that revelations are sent down to me.

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّن طِينٍ (٧١) فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ (٧٢) فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ (٧٣) إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ اسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤)⁵⁶

These verses portray the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan that has been mentioned in parts in various earlier *sūrahs* and I have tried to explain its various aspects at these instances. In Sūrah Baqarah specially, this incident has been explained in great detail. Here this incident is referred to relate the arrogance mentioned in first verse of this *sūrah* to its origins – the arrogance which is severely criticized in the whole *sūrah*. In other words, the Quraysh are shown the mirror that the arrogance and haughtiness which have overcome them and as a result of which they are rejecting the call of the Qur’ān is what they have inherited from Satan and not from the righteous. It was this arrogance which led Satan to not prostrate before Adam (sws) and become among the accursed. In other words, if the Quraysh want to revive the practice of Satan, they should also get ready to face the consequences which the followers of Satan are destined to face.

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإِيْدِي أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ (٧٥)⁵⁷

While scolding Satan for not prostrating before Adam (sws), the Almighty has asked him what made him do this when Adam (sws) was someone He created specially from His hands; was it his arrogance or was it because he considers himself to be a superior being. The expression *خَلَقْتُ بِإِيْدِي* refers to the elaborate and special manner in which God created Adam (sws). A human being is the magnum opus of God with regard to his abilities. If he rightly uses these abilities he can even cross the angels what to speak of subjugating the jinn. All the universe is put to man’s service yet he himself is subservient to God only. In other words, the question posed is: What made Satan deny God’s directive to prostrate before Adam (sws) – someone who was

56. Bear in mind when your Lord said to the angels: “I am creating a human from clay. Then when I have fashioned him and have breathed My spirit into him, prostrate yourselves before him.” So, all the angels prostrated themselves before him except Satan. He showed arrogance and became among the disbelievers.

57. “Satan!” said He, ‘What stopped you from prostrating before that which I created from My own hands? Are you too proud, or do you deem yourself superior?’”

created by God in such a masterful way? The real importance in this regard is the abilities which man has and not the substance he is made of. If God has created a masterful species from a clod of clay, then should this species not be acknowledged merely because it is made of clay?

The second verse addresses Satan and asks him if this hideous act of his is because of his unbridled arrogance or because he regards himself to be someone superior.

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ (٧٦)⁵⁸

Satan's reply to the question posed by the Almighty was that he regarded himself to be superior and the reason for this was that he has been created from fire and human beings are made from clay. In other words, he claimed superiority and the basis of this was the superior substance from which he was created. Satan, it can be seen, bases his superiority not any ability but on his lineage. This is the same logic which the leaders of the Quraysh would use against the Prophet, as is referred to earlier in this *sūrah*: they would contend that if the Almighty needed to reveal a Book, He should have revealed it to someone among them and not to someone so modest as Muḥammad (sws) whose companions too were poor and needy like him.

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ (٧٧) وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ لَعْنَتِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٧٨)⁵⁹

The antecedent of the pronoun in مِنْهَا is Paradise because as is evident from other verses of the Qur'ān it is there that the whole incident of Adam (sws) and Satan took place. After Satan's rebelliousness, the Almighty regarded him as accursed and asked him to leave the place and told him that this curse will be on him till the Day of Judgement; he was told that on that Day will he endure the punishment of what he did.

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (٧٩) قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ (٨٠) إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (٨١)⁶⁰

After being accursed by the Almighty, Satan thought that his respite in

58. Satan replied: "I am superior to him. You created me from fire and him from clay."

59. God ordered: "Be gone because you are accursed! And My curse shall remain on you until the Day of Reckoning."

60. He replied: 'Lord! Give me respite till the Day people will be raised to life.' He said: "Respite has been granted to you till a prescribed time."

which he could further his plans is being terminated, and that he will not be given any chance to inveigle human beings. Hence, he requested the Almighty to grant him respite till the day when people are raised up for their accountability. His request was accepted by the Almighty and he was given this respite.

قَالَ فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٢) إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (٨٣)⁶¹

When he was granted this respite, Satan arrogantly stated by swearing an oath on God's honour that he would lead all his creation astray and except all those whom the Almighty had selected for His servitude he would lure the rest into his deceptive schemes; he contended that by doing this he would prove that man whom the Almighty regarded as worthy of honour and respect does not in any way deserve this honour and respect and that he was right when he did not prostrate before him.

قَالَ فَالْحَقُّ وَالْحَقُّ أَقُولُ (٨٤) لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمِمَّنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٨٥)⁶²

The challenge thrown by Satan had a lot of arrogance in it. The Almighty responded to this challenge with full majesty and absolute condescension. He told Satan that if he would lead everyone astray, then Satan should hear out these true words of God and He always states the truth that He will fill the belly of Hell with Satan and his followers.

This whole incident is related to the leaders of the Quraysh and their blind followers so that if their eyes have insight and ears can really hear, they can see and hear their fate in this anecdote.

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ (٨٦) إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ (٨٧) وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ (٨٨)⁶³

Here at the end it has been proclaimed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) that if he is reciting the Qur'ān before his addressees, then they should realize that this is not to seek any reward from them so that he will be deprived of it if they do not give due importance to the

61. "I swear by Your glory," said Satan, "that I will lead them all astray except your servants who you have selected."

62. God replied: "This is the truth then and I speak nothing but the truth that I will surely fill Hell with you and all among those who are your followers."

63. Say: "Neither do I demand any recompense from you nor am I among those who pretend. This is only a reminder to mankind; and before long you shall know of the news it has given."

Qur’ān; he has not borne this heavy burden out of his own will; it is in fact a responsibility that God has imposed on him and hence it is God with whom rests his reward; as a result, it is God Who will help and guide him in fulfilling this responsibility; if they reject it, they should remember that this is a great reminder from God for the people of the world. The events it is informing them of will soon manifest themselves before his addressees.

By the grace of God, the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah* stands completed with these lines. وَأَخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (and our final statement is that gratitude be to God, the Lord of the worlds).

Raḥmānābād

21st May 1975 AD
